United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/985
30 September 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council welcomes New York Agreement of 25 September by Government of El Salvador and Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional.

- Secretary-General welcomes announcement by United States President concerning nuclear weapons and forces.

- General Assembly hears addresses by Presidents of Sao Tome and Principe and Ukraine, followed by statements by Foreign Ministers of United Republic of Tanzania, Egypt, Pakistan and Poland. President of Ecuador and Foreign Ministers of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Uruguay also address Assembly.

- Secretary-General says ageing of world's population is one of the most important demographic phenomena of our time in message to mark first International Day for Elderly, tomorrow.

- Secretary-General calls for a strengthening of the international debt strategy.

- Children's Rights Committee begins first session in Geneva.

* * *

The Security Council welcomed today the New York Agreement signed on 25 September by the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) which provides guarantees and conditions on a peaceful settlement to the armed conflict. The Agreement includes the provisions concerning the reintegration of the members of the FMLN, within a framework of full legality, into the civil, institutional and political life of the country.

By its unanimous resolution, adopted after an oral report by Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the Council commended the parties for the flexibility and seriousness which they demonstrated through the course of the recent talks in New York. It urged both sides at the next negotiating

(more)

For information media—not an official record

round, to begin on 12 October, to proceed at an intensive and urgent pace to reach at the earliest possible date a cease-fire and an overall settlement to the armed conflicts, in accordance with the framework of the New York Agreement.

The Council further urged both sides to exercise maximum restraint in order to create the best climate for a successful last stage of the negotiations; and called upon both sides to continue to cooperate fully with United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL).

* * *

The Secretary-General has warmly welcomed what he terms the "timely and far-reaching" announcement by United States President George Bush on 27 September, outlining a number of unilateral measures to cut down on nuclear weapons and forces.

In a statement attributable to his Spokesman, the Secretary-General said the announcement comprised a most substantial set of measures that would further the process of nuclear disarmament and further de-escalate the threat of nuclear war. The steps envisaged could go a long way towards strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar also expressed hope that discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union relating to the proposal by President Bush for the elimination of certain multiple nuclear warheads would commence as soon as possible. The success of those negotiations would be of utmost importance to the world as a whole, he said.

* * *

Opening the second week of the General Assembly's debate this morning, Miguel Trovoada, President of Sao Tome and Principe, said in his address that the economic situation in the African countries has been steadily deteriorating over the past few years, despite efforts made by their Governments to improve the plight of their populations.

Mr. Trovoada called on the community of industrialized nations to contribute financially to the economic and social development of Africa.

In his address, the President of Ukraine, Leonid M. Kravchuk, noted that his Government had proclaimed Ukraine independent on 24 August -- the beginning of a new era in the history of his country.

Speaking on behalf of Ukrainians who had suffered the disastrous effects of the Chernobyl tragedy, he urged Governments, primarily those of nuclear powers, to display enough political will and take immediate measures so that nuclear testing could be stopped forever.

Mr. Kravchuk welcomed the latest proposal by United States President Bush, supported by leaders of nuclear powers, for the drastic cuts in

(more)

short-range nuclear weapons, saying they were a significant step towards a more secure future. Ukraine wanted to become directly involved in the disarmament negotiating process, the Ukrainian President said.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, Ahmed Hassan Diria, stated that, although the ending of East-West confrontation had fostered greater cooperation in international relations, it had not led to "quantum reduction of major problems". He cited the economic plight of the third world, the eradication of apartheid in South Africa, attainment of national self-determination for the Palestinians, the return of all occupied Arab territories and the democratization of the international system as remaining problems.

In his statement to the Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Amre Moussa, underlined the importance of the initiative taken by the United States to convene a Middle East peace conference. Under the recent international developments, the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the Palestinian Question at its core, had entered a new phase, he said.

Mr. Moussa said however that the continuation of the policy and practice of construction of settlement on occupied Arab and Palestinian territories had a negative effect on the prospect for peace, as it attempts to entrench a fait accompli that represents the violation of law and legitimacy.

In his statement, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju, noted that the people of the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir had risen to demand their inalienable right to self-determination -- a right solemnly pledged to the Kashmiri people by India, Pakistan and the international community in various resolutions adopted by the United Nations. The future of Jammu and Kashmir must be decided in accordance with the will of the people through free and impartial elections under the United Nations auspices. He said the situation in those areas had greatly deteriorated and even Indian human rights organizations and media had acknowledged the grave human rights violations by Indian forces in those areas.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, stated that the reactivation of growth in the developing countries and the re-orientation of economies of the new democracies to market rules were of paramount importance. The model of world trade must change; protectionism was wrong for consumers and was harmful for producers, he said.

Addressing the Assembly this afternoon, the President of Ecuador, Rodrigo Borja, spoke of the sweeping changes in the world, saying that in Latin America, "never have so many of our countries lived under democratic systems". But, he said, this political progress was not matched by economic prosperity or social well-being. "Our democracies are sailing through rough waters and we, the Latin American statesmen, are trying to hold our bearing in the thick of the storm."

On behalf of his Government, he expressed support for the initiative of the Economic and Social Council, to call a world summit for an in-depth look

(more)

at the issue of social development and for a search for new indicators and formulas to measure human development.

The Under-Secretary for Political Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, Sayyid Haytham Bin Tariq Bin Taimor Al-Said, said the Kuwait crisis was the greatest test to the new world order following the cold war, and that the new world order had "with God's blessing", passed the test. Asserting that the United Nations had achieved a great triumph, Mr. Al-Said said that the international community had decisively demonstrated that international relations should be governed by international law. He expressed his Government's appreciation to all the "fraternal and friendly " States which supported the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries during the crisis and told the Assembly that Oman had been working, along with other regional members of the GCC, on future arrangements for security and stability in the region.

The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, in his statement, thanked all the countries, peoples and organizations who supported Saudi Arabia in defence of its security during the Gulf crisis.

On behalf of his Government, he voiced full support for United States efforts to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East. He affirmed his Government's view that the building of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, was a serious violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. The Saudi Prince expressed the hope that the international community would apply to the Palestinian question the same principles it applied to the Gulf crisis, so that the international legality would be firmly established and the principles of justice, freedom and the right of peoples to self-determination strongly upheld.

In his statement, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Raul Manglapus, stated that, following its democratic traditions, the people of the Philippines were presently gathering signatures for a national referendum on the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security which the Government of that country had signed with the United States but which had been rejected by the Philippine Senate. "In our direct democracy", he said, "we respect our Senate, but we also respect our people". The Senate and the people must rule together, he said.

Mr. Manglapus further expressed the view that the United Nations was not only a forum of States or a conciliator of multilateral contradictions. It was above all a proclaimer and promoter of democratic values.

In his statement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Hector Gros Espiell, drew the Assembly's attention to the launching of the Uruguay Round, five years ago, aimed at putting an end to the protectionist waves which erode commercial exchanges. He stated that the Round would not reach a successful ending if a "satisfactory solution concerning the liberalization of agricultural trade" was not reached, and he affirmed his country's intention to contribute to such success.

(more)

Emphasizing that the last leg of the trade negotiations must reach a positive outcome in December, the Foreign Minister stated that if the talks fail, "we shall have to admit our shameful incapacity in today's world, to achieve formulas that encourage the free and non-discriminatory international trade that banishes protectionism and becomes an element of vigorous development".

The aging of the world's population was one of the most important demographic phenomena of our time, stated Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in a message to mark the first International Day for the Elderly, tomorrow.

By the year 2025, he said, it was expected that the elderly would represent nearly 15 per cent of the total population of the globe. This prognosis had important policy implications which must be taken into account by development planners and other decision-makers.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that in designating 1 October as the International Day for the Elderly, the General Assembly had emphasized that the elderly are a valuable asset to society and had underscored the significant role they must play in the development process, as well as the need to protect and promote their rights.

In separate development, the Secretary-General today responded to questions by correspondents on his role as a negotiator in the Yugoslavian crisis. He said he was in contact with the crisis mediator, Lord Carrington, and all the European organizations: the European Economic Community (EEC), the Western European Union (WEU), and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), "in order to be as helpful as possible." This action, the Secretary-General said, was within the mandate he had received from the Security Council.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was a powerful tool for bringing about real and lasting changes in the lives of children, Jan Martenson, Under-Secretary-General, told the Committee on the Rights of the Child as it opened its first session this morning in Geneva.

During its three-week meeting, the Committee, which is charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention, will adopt its rules of procedure and swear in its 10 members. It will also determine the form and contents of reports to be submitted by States parties to the Convention on the progress made in fulfilling their obligations under the Treaty. The first report of a country is due two years after it has ratified the document.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first instrument ever to give children's rights the force of international law, was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, 30 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Unlike the Declaration, the Convention obligates States which accept it to be legally accountable for their actions towards children.

(more)

* * *

The Secretary-General has called for a strengthening of the international debt strategy. In his report on the external debt crisis of 18 September, the Secretary-General says that with the debt crisis entering its second decade and totalling some $1.2 trillion world-wide, it would be "premature to assert that the end of the crisis is near".

Citing the fact that only two countries -- Mexico and Chile -- had been able to resume borrowing, he said most debt-stroken countries still needed additional rounds of rescheduling. He recommended the lowering of international interest rates, an increased flow of international capital to heavily indebted countries, and improved access to global markets.

He concluded that there was room to improve the effectiveness of the current debt strategy "by raising the scale of debt reduction and enlarging the scope of debt eligible for restructuring".

* *** *